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ABSTRACT

Suggesting that, as a field of research, reading-writing relationship is still in its infancy, this paper examines how the field has developed over time and where it is currently heading. Using different decades (beginning with the 1960s) as a guiding time frame, the paper (1) delineates major shifts in the conception of reading and writing, and the focus of reading-writing research; (2) describes literacy instructional practices typical of each era; and (3) discusses the future directions of reading-writing research. Contains 28 references. (RS)

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READING-WRITING CONNECTIONS:

SHIFTS IN RESEARCH FOCI AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

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Although some initial attempts to see the relationships between reading and writing had been made much earlier (Stotsky, 1983), the upsurge of researchers' interest on reading-writing relationships did not happen until 1970s (Tierney, 1992). As a field of research, that is to say, reading-writing relationship is still in its infancy (Tierney & Shahanan, 1991). How has the field developed over time and where is it currently heading?

Using different decades as a guiding time frame, this article will (a) delineate major shifts in the conception of reading and writing, and the focus of reading-writing research, (b) describe literacy instructional practices typical of each era, and (c) discuss the future directions of reading-writing research.

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The 1960s--

During this decade, the field of behavioral sciences, including literacy instruction, were dominated by Behavioral Psychology, with B.F. Skinner among those in the forefront. This school of thought suggests that learners are relatively passive, subject to direction from without (Weaver, 1988), and language is acquired through imitation and modeling, proceeding in a linear manner from the smallest part to increasingly larger wholes (Beck, 1993; Harste, et al., 1984).

During this period reading was conceived as a sequential process-- proceeding from identifying words to assembling words into bigger meaningful chunks (e.g., phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.), to getting the meaning from the text (Beck, 1993). Reading research, at this point in time, was focused mainly on texts (Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993), and writing was considered a separate act, secondary to reading.

Conceptualized as separate entities as they were, the relationship of reading and writing was nonexistent. Reading research was commonly kept separate from writing research. During classroom reading instruction, writing was rare; during writing

time, reading was usually not there (Tierney, 1992).

The 1970s -- 1980s

The first half of the 1970s was still dominated by learning theories advocated by Behavioral Psychologists (Weaver, 1988), until the establishment of "cognitive model of learning" in the mid 1970s. Cognitive model perceives reading as consisting of a complex set of coordinated mental processes, including perceptual, linguistic, and conceptual operation; and the information the reader supplies and the information in the text influence each other to produce comprehension (Back, 1993). This new conceptualization was later refined and known as a schema theory.

The development of schema theory provided a promising new direction for examination of interrelationships between reading and writing. Theory and research in a number of disciplines have contributed to the view that there are similarities between the process of reading and the process of writing in that they both require the active construction of meaning, such meaning construction being dependent on prior knowledge structures or schemata (Kucer, 1985; Squire, 1983; Tierney & Pearson, 1984). A schema is described as a cognitive structure which is formed on the basis of past experience consisting of a set of expectations about

what things will look like and/or the order in which they will occur (Crowhurst, 1991).

Inspired by this schematic notion, some researchers began to conduct correlational studies on reading and writing. Enthusiasms during this period engendered two somewhat interrelated hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is that the reading-writing connection is directional. That is, reading and writing share structural components such that the structure of whatever is acquired in one modality can then be applied in the other. This theoretical construct suggests two lines of research direction: reading-to-writing model and writing-to-reading model.

Reading-to-writing model claims that reading influences writing, but the writing knowledge is not particularly useful. For example, in support of this claim was a study by Eckoff (1983), in which second-graders' writing was found to reflect the structures and styles of basal readers used in class. Further support was gained from Taylor & Beach's (1984) study on the effects of instruction in using text structure to recall expository text and instruction which emphasized writing expository prose, which lead to the conclusion that instruction in reading influenced both measures, but writing instruction impacted on neither writing nor reading.

The second hypothesis is writing-to-reading directional model,

which assumes that it is writing that affects reading. A number of research reviewed by Stotsky (1983) suggests that writing activities can be useful for improving reading comprehension and retention of information (e.g., summarizing, paraphrasing, and outlining). A stronger support to the claim of this writing-to-reading model can be found in some studies reviewed by Belanger (1987) in which it is shown that direct instruction in sentence, paragraph, and discourse structure for writing results in significant improvement in reading.

A closer look on some studies on reading and writing, and other topics in literacy instruction (e.g., advance organizers, study skills, etc.) has indicated that most tranfer effects result from instruction (Kamil, 1994). Therefore it cannot be claimed that transfer of structural components from one domain to another is necessarily automatic.

Further discussions on cognitive processes involved in reading and writing (e.g., Kucer, 1985; Squire, 1983; and Tierney & Pearson, 1983) have further refined the conceptualization of reading and writing processes, and the relationships of the two. Reading and writing have now been perceived as stemming from a single underlying proficiency, the common link being the cognitive process of constructing meaning, suggesting that both reading and writing represent a process of interactive and dynamic activation and

refinement of schemata. Writing, in this refined conception, is perceived as an adjunct for reading.

Guiding reading-writing research in line with this refined conceptualization was non-directional hypothesis. That is, unlike the directional model, the transfer in non-directional model can occur in either direction. This non-directional model gained empirical support, among few others, from a study by Hiebert, Englert, and Brennan (1983), which investigated the relationship between the recognition and production of different text structures (description, sequence, enumeration, and comparison & contrast) by college students. One of the major findings of the study was that reading-writing relationship was significant for all the text structures but description; This lead to the conclusion that sensitivity to text structure was highly related to performance on comprehension measures. That is, students understood their reading better when they were able to recognize the text structure. Explaining the finding, the researchers stated:

> "...(T)he ability to recognize related details consistent with the topic and text structure in a written passage was related to the ability to generate related details congruent with the topic and text

> structure in a writing class. Thus, similar knowledge bases about text structures could be hypothesized to underlay reading and writing. (Hiebert et al., 1983:77)

In accordance with this theory, at this point in time, common in reading class was the use of writing activities to activate schema (i.e., prereading activities), and writing as post-reading activities (e.g., writing in response to reading).

Latter Part of the 1980s-- Early Part of 1990s

The second half of the 1980s was marked with a special come back for the pioneering work of Rosenblatt's transactional theory. "Transaction," as Rosenblatt (1988) has defined it, is used to designate "relationships in which each element conditions and is conditioned by the other in a mutually-constituted situation." (p.2) Reading, in this transactional theory, is perceived as a transaction between a reader and a text; meaning that in comprehending the text the reader actively creates meaning, and in so doing she brings into the text her background knowledge about the topic, about sociolinguistic conventions, her intentions, expectations and purposes of reading, and her values and beliefs

that she already has in mind (Musthafa, 1994). From this perspective, in other words, reading is not one-way process, but a two-way transaction between the mind of the reader and the language of the text because meaning does not reside ready made in the text or in the reader; it is derived from the interaction between the content and the structure of the author's message and the experiences and prior knowledge of the reader (Rosenblatt, 1988, 1989). Likewise, writing is also a transaction, as Rosenblatt (1988) has put it:

> Writing, we know, is always an event in time, occurring at a particular moment in the writer's biography, in particular circumstances, under particular pressures, external as well as internal. In short, the writer is always transacting with a personal, social, and cultural environment (p.7)

In light of this transactional conception of reading and writing, some researchers have conducted studies on the nature of reading-writing relationships. One major theoretical construct here is that, as a process, reading and writing mutually condition each other, and in transaction, each of the transacting elements

conditions and is conditioned by the other. This bidirectional model has gained some support from research on composing processes, particularly on revising. For instance, rereading, as a part of composing act, can lead to awareness of places where words did not convey the intended meaning (Boutwell, 1983). More direct data-based support can be found in Shanahan's (1984) work, in which he studied second and fifth graders and found that reading and writing were significantly related for those groups.

Recent multiple-case studies by Dyson (1989), which have shown children's composing processes employing multiple modes of expressions simultaneously, add powerful support to this transactional view.

The instructional translation of this bidirectional model of reading-writing relationships is manifest in integrated language arts classes where reading and writing are learned together. In higher grades, the reading-writing integration manifests in the so called writing across curriculum or writing in content areas (Vacca, & Linek, 1992).

Where are We Going from Here?

As foregoing discussions have indicated, the nature of reading-writing relationships is not as direct and fixed as it might

appear. Critical reflections of what research has so far successfully revealed have triggered more questions. For instance, Tierney (1991) has posed challenging questions such as these: What will reading-writing relationship look like in the context where reading and writing work together? Where and when does reading interfere with writing and writing with reading?

While the latter part of 1980s and early part of 1990s have witnessed the growing interest in the synergism that occurred when reading and writing worked together, the relationship was seen as straight forward; and the majority of the available research focused on reading and writing single texts. Seeing this fact in light of the current notions of multiple realities, multiple modes of expressions, multiple media, multiple ways of knowing and relating generates still another string of questions. In other words, there is still much to explore and see. Eventually, research on reading-writing relationships should, and will, move towards context-specific descriptions of natural literacy events in their delicate, social fabric in which they are situated. To this end, scholars and researchers would need to widen their working space and develop wider networks of interdisciplinary collaborative efforts.

It is to this direction that reading-writing research trend seems to be heading.

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